

SCHOOL DISTRICT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting
Tuesday August 1, 2006
Arizona State University Decision Theatre

Chairman Marty Shultz called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and attendance was noted by the secretary.

Members Present

Marty Shultz
Art Harding
Jay Blanchard
Thomas Schoaf
Dave Naugle
Joseph Thomas
Doris Goodale
George Martinez
Rita Leyva
Michael Hunter
Kent Scribner

Members Absent

Vicki Anderson

Guests Present

Barbara Robey, former Mayor, Litchfield Park; ASBA
Dianne Smith, GPEMC
Linda Jeffries, Alhambra District
Terry Eisenberg, Alhambra District
Carlos Contreras, Intel
Jason Bagley, Intel
Perry Hill, GESD
Charolotte Boyle, Superintendent, Creighton District
Louise Moskowitz, APS

Staff Present

Gretchen Kitcell, APS
Rhonda Bannard, APS
Marlene Johnston, ADE
Deirdre Hahn, ASU Decision Theater
Ron Russell, ASU Decision Theater
Nettie Klingler, Siedman Institute

INTRODUCTIONS AND REMARKS:

The meeting was called to order at 2:00pm by Chairman Shultz. Commissioners, staff and guests gathered in the Decision Theater. Chairman Shultz noted a quorum was present. He asked the group to introduce themselves and talk briefly about their summer vacations. Commissioner Schoaf became the Mayor of Litchfield Park, Commissioner Scribner hired many teachers, Commissioner Goodale is running for the House of Representatives in District 3 and Commissioners Goodale and Naugle gave an update presentation to Arizona Society for Public Administration (ASPA) on the Redistricting Commission which they said received mixed reactions.

Data is in

Chairman Shultz said that the Commission has done their due diligence and the data provided from the education and business communities has been great. The Commissioners now need to get acquainted with the mounds of data that have come out of the discussions. The Commission is charged with designing unified districts and with the help of staff example maps have now been drafted and are included in the notebook provided (attached).

Decision Theater work plan - ART

Dr. Hahn presented a PowerPoint providing an overview of the Decision Theater approach to the redistricting process (included in notebook). She explained the assumptions used to filter the data and the software tool developed (ART) to manipulate the data allowing for comparisons of characteristics of proposed redistricting. They removed data from accommodation, regional and Joint Technological Education Districts and only used data from non unified Elementary and High School Districts.

Chairman Shultz interjected that there are assumptions based on the current provisions of the law (SB1068) but it is possible that changes may be proposed to the law. The Commission discovered they did not have the authority to some things that would be in the best interest of the school districts. Bill sponsor Senator Linda Gray is open to changes in the law. The Commission should keep this potential in mind as they propose districts.

The Decision Theater screens showed a map of the school districts, the spreadsheet of the data collected including costs, funding sources, numbers and demographics of students, numbers of teachers and administrators and busing miles. Most data has been collected, much being provided by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), but Nettie and her assistant are filling in missing holes. There is an interest in what the total dollars are per student. Although this data is not available yet, it is being worked on. Gretchen Kitchell said that the Commission should only ask for data it truly needs.

Sample maps - Yuma

Chairman Shultz introduced Commissioner Blanchard who walked through three possible scenarios for Yuma County using ART. Sample charts are included in the notebook (attached). Demographics for the total number of students, 37,000 were displayed. Some of the data displayed based on the proposed districts included the percentage of free and

reduced lunch qualified, ELL and SPpEd membership, race numbers, number of administrators, student/administrator ratio, student/certified teacher minimum and maximum ratios, teacher count, teacher salaries, bus miles, M&O funds, excess utilities, unrestricted capital and deseg. money.

Other issues that arose during the Yuma example

Clarification of definitions

During the presentation several clarifications were made. Commissioner Hardy clarified the difference between student count and Average Daily Membership (ADM) used in the data. Commissioner Scribner clarified some of the categories like soft capital and M&O. It was discussed that the definitions for administrator and certified teacher are very general and not uniform. They said that unification impacts costs to districts in a complex way because elementary schools have more need for certified teachers such as speech pathologists and high school have more costs for soft capital for labs etc.

Excess Utilities

Gretchen Kitchell said that state support for excess utility costs are scheduled to go away in 2009. The original intent in 1990 was to help schools with rising costs for utilities but included was the cost for telecom. This came to include costs associated with internet, cell phones and PDAs. So although costs for electricity, gas, water and sewer have gone down, collections for excess utilities has gone up. These funds are collected from district property taxes but do not need approval from voters. 75% of districts use this funding. If there is no change in the law, this state support, totally about \$100 million, will disappear in 2009. Commissioner Scribner said that property poor districts will have trouble replacing this funding.

Deseg money

The issue of deseg money is different. Only a few districts get a lot of money. Tuscon Unified School District gets the most deseg money, but they are unified so this will not be a concern for the Commission. Phoenix Union is the next largest recipient but is not unified so it is a factor in that redistricting.

Fast growing districts

In Yuma there are many students receiving free and reduced lunches. Some schools have 98% free and reduced student populations. Chairman Shultz said that Yuma has an impressive economic future. APS is building three new power plants there. Rhonda Bannard said that the Commission needs to figure this kind of growth into their plans. Commissioner Blanchard says there will be a port of entry that will help feed growth. He suggested the Commission get growth projects from the School Facilities Board (SFB).

Buckeye is one of the fastest growing districts in the country. They will have 45,000 students in ten years. Also, Avondale and Agua Fria are growing rapidly.

Small school exemption

Commissioner Naugle brought up the small school exemption. He said it would be helpful to study if it would be better to use adjusted RCLs instead of the small school adjustment.

Upcoming meetings

Chairman Shultz says that now that the Commission has a sense of ART it would be good to move forward on draft unification plans. He wants the process to be transparent. It was suggested that the Decision Theater could be utilized to make the meeting available to the public. There is a camera in the room and the feed could go out over the internet or off the space on the ASU satellite. He would like to meet with groups like Diane Smith's GPEMC to brief them and obtain their input. Commissioner Harding said that if they were provided electronically, ADE would post the documents provided to the Commission at this meeting on the Redistricting website.

County based working groups

Because it makes sense to use in a geographic, data driven approach to constructing the Commissions plan, the Commission will divide into working groups or individuals to create draft proposals for the individual counties.

Apache County – Michael Hunter

Cochise – Dave Naugle and Michael Hunter

Mohave – Jay Blanchard and Doris Goodale

Pinal – Dave Naugle, Joseph Thomas and George Martinez

Santa Cruz – Dave Naugle

Yavapai – Rita Leyva and Art Harding

La Paz – Jay Blanchard, Doris Goodale and Dave Naugle

Navajo – all unified (the model county)

Coconino* *(There are two isolated districts that could feed into a unified district, but the law would need to be changed to allow the Commission the authority to do this.)*

Greenlee – No plans for unification

Gila* *(The elementary district feeds into a unified high school now)*

Pima – *a special situation- the are three small school districts that may form their own unified district since they are growing.*

Yuma- use the current draft plan.

Commissioner Hardy asked Dierdre how she wanted the Commissioners to submit their plans. She said she would develop a template the Commissioners could submit to the Decision Theater staff.

Maricopa County-need for additional input

Because Maricopa County is so complex they will deal with this separately.

Commissioner Schoaf said he didn't want to see gargantuan districts of 50,000 or 90,000 students. Chairman Shultz said all the Commissioners probably had an idea of the optimum district size.

The Commission still needs input from the schools regarding how they feel about potential unification. He said the Commission needed more districts like Alhambra who are taking an active part in the process. When Chairman Shultz suggested sending a letter to the districts, Commissioner Martinez said that a letter had already been sent to the districts and there was little response. Gretchen Kitchell suggested this letter should be stronger than the first more generic letter. The letter should talk about the data collected and the draft maps. Kent Scribner says the districts are waiting for something more concrete before they respond. Chairman Shultz said they will send one letter to the district administrators, the alphabet groups, county and other local officials, governing boards and maybe the press. A draft of this letter will be created and sent to the Commissioners for review. The Commissioners should make sure all the concepts are in the letter and turn it around within a few days.

The Commissioners all agreed that the districts need to take an active interest and to realize the Commission will have a plan ready for 2008 ballot. It was said that the superintendents are waiting for the Commission to present a plan to be published so they can shoot it down.

Rhonda asked if there would be time enough at the August 28th meeting to discuss Maricopa County and all the other counties as well. It was agreed there should be time and that the Maricopa County districts would need until September to come up with input for the Commission.

Public input – Charlotte Boyle of Creighton

Charlotte Boyle, Superintendent of the Creighton District said that redistricting is important to them and their governing board. They have attended other redistricting meetings. When the legislation was enacted they got a letter from Phoenix Union but nothing developed. They hope the Superintendent will attend the next meeting. They are planning a two day study session this weekend.

Rita Leyva's email about bonding to build new schools

Chairman Shultz read from an email sent by Commission Leyva (attached) to the Commissioners regarding the potential situation where a district may be required to build a new school that the SFB won't pay for. This would require the district to pass a bond to pay for school. This is another area that may require a legislative change.

Closing remarks

Everyone agreed that the staff of the Decision Theater had done an impressive job and thanked them. Chairman Shultz will send out an email reviewing the assignments the Commissioners agreed to and proposed upcoming meeting dates. They will prepare a package of suggested legislative changes for Senator Gray.

Without objection the meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Attach notebook

Unification report by county dated July 20, 2006

Submitted by Marlene Johnston